

February 16, 2011

To the Montana State Legislature:

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter today; I apologize that I cannot be here in person. I am writing to encourage you to fund expansion plans at the University of Montana, College of Technology.

My name is John Dresen and I am a recent graduate of the COT, with an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Practical Nursing. I am 37 years old and live in Ronan, Montana with my wife and four children.

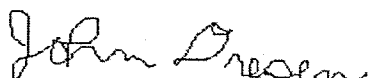
My experience with the COT began in 2009 when I was laid-off from work in the timber industry due to sawmill closures in Western Montana. As I began investigating my options at that time, it became apparent that continuing my education was really my only viable option. The primary reason I chose the COT was the fact that I could start the pre-requisites in the summer session and would be ready to apply to the Practical Nursing Program that same winter. No other school in this region offered that flexibility in scheduling. Utilizing the summer sessions, I was able to complete all of the pre-requisites as well as the PN program in a little over 18 months, graduating in December 2010.

I believe my experience is not a particularly unique one. Throughout my education at the COT, I was aware of several others I shared classes with who were in a very similar situation. In the presence of a very challenging economy, many people are looking into getting further education in order to change careers. Many, like myself, with families and homes, are unable to pack up, move, and spend four years in a university working on a bachelor's degree. Schools offering specialized vocational and technical training in a reasonable time frame are, I believe, crucial to getting people in my situation back into the workforce.

As the COT strived to accommodate all of these new students, young and old, this has led to a significant overcrowding problem on the current campus. Many of the faculty offices as well as some classrooms have been relocated into modular buildings set up in the parking lot. As a matter of fact, the entire Nursing department, classrooms, offices, and all are contained in modular buildings. They are quite crowded and create a very challenging environment in which to learn. This also has led to a significant problem with parking due to the space taken up by the modular buildings.

The nursing department has worked very hard to utilize their resources as best they can to serve all of the students, but I believe they are at a point where they are running out of options due to space. I understand the legislature is looking to be as frugal as possible with this session's budget, due to the current economy, but I hope that you will see the incredible investment opportunity provided in expanding the COT campus. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Respectfully submitted,



John Dresen, LPN

The University of Montana College of Technology East Campus

